

EMPAC

WATERING THE FLOWERS :: FILM SERIES

THE UNRELIABLE NARRATOR MARTINE SYMS

THURSDAY
NOV 10
7:00 PM



The Unreliable Narrator

Martine Syms

Los Angeles-based artist Martine Syms is in residence at EMPAC to shoot *An Evening with Queen White*, one chapter of a new feature-length film project co-commissioned by EMPAC to be shot using a 360-degree camera rig. For this event, Syms will introduce a program of videos alongside discussion of moving images that have been influential to her work. *An Evening with Queen White* will be presented in spring 2017 at MoMA, New York, and Raven Row, London. It will be presented at EMPAC August-September 2017.

An artist, performer, and designer, Syms also founded the imprint Dominica Publishing, which publishes artist books exploring blackness as a topic, reference, marker, and audience in visual culture. Her book *Implication and Distinctions: Format, Content and Context in Contemporary Race Film* considers performances of blackness in mainstream cinema from 1990 to the present. Other work includes *The Mundane Afrofuturist Manifesto*, which calls for the culture of the African diaspora to focus its energy on Earth rather than toward transcendence in the cosmos.

PROGRAM

My Vine Comp (2016)

Martine Syms

HD video, color, sound, 6 min

Century (2012)

Kevin Jerome Everson

16mm transferred to HD video, color, sound, 7 min

Copyright Kevin Jerome Everson; courtesy the artist; Trilobite-Arts DAC; Picture Palace Pictures

Studio test NO NO NO (2013)

Sondra Perry

HD video, color, sound, 2 min 15 sec

Untitled (Saturday, October 16, 1993) (2015)

Rami George

HD video, color, sound, 2 min 15 sec

Monkey (2016)

Marco Braunschweiler

HD video, color, sound, 1 min 18 sec

Nine Hour Delay:

Printemps-Été-Automne-Hiver 2058 (2013)

Irena Haiduk

HD video, color, sound, 2 min 7 sec

The Fall of Communism (2014)

Hannah Black

HD video, color, sound, 6 min

The Borrowers (Ndinda) (2015)

Nicole Miller

HD video, color, sound

The Bucket (2015)

Asha Schechter

HD video, color, sound, 7 min 30 sec

Doomed Poet 1-4 (2016)

Theo Darst

HD video, color, sound

Contemporary Artist (1999)

Ximena Cuevas

SD video, color, sound, 4 min 57 sec

Double (2001)

Kerry Tribe

SD video, color, sound, 10 min 25 sec

ALL FILMS COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS

WATERING THE FLOWERS

Watering the Flowers is a new year-long screening program. Each evening focuses on a recent film or video by an EMPAC-affiliated artist, and will be accompanied by a program of other shorts or features that were influential in the making of their work, whether fiction or documentary, experimental or commercial.

Watering the Flowers, or *L'Arroseur*, is the title of a lost film from 1896 by cinema pioneer Georges Méliès, based on Louis Lumière's film *L'Arroseur Arrosé*, which was released the previous year. *L'Arroseur Arrosé* is often credited as the first fiction film, and its 45 seconds comprise a single gag played on a gardener watering his plants. Highly influential to the development of both narrative cinema and on-screen comedy, it was endlessly copied, parodied, duplicated, and is appropriated even to this day. Its promotional poster was also a first: an audience watching the film—an image of cinema itself.

The title has also been referred to in distinct ways: *The Waterer Watered* or *The Sprinkler Sprinkled* or *The Tables Turned on the Gardener*. This act of differing translation points to the subjective relationship each of us has to language, whether textual, visual, or sonic. All artists are inspired by and learn from others, and this program seeks to “water the flowers,” so to speak, opening a space for collective watching through the artist's eyes. At a time when so many of our moving images are viewed from a computer or handheld device, and our selections are channeled algorithmically according to our narrow interests, this program provides the opportunity to see films that are “lost.” Not films lost in the sense of Méliès' work, but films that are potentially masked by the flood of daily data. *Watering the Flowers* pursues inspiration through the juxtaposition of the unusual, the banned, the overlooked, the old, the new, the personal, the counter-historical, the experimental, and the popular.

NOTES

1. I love the 30-second spot because I love television.
2. A great television ad becomes important when it functions as a temporal marker. The spot must symbolize the beliefs, tastes, language, and emotions of an audience and an era.
3. What makes a commercial? Duration—15 seconds, 30 seconds, 60 seconds, 90 seconds. Focus—communicate exactly one idea.
4. Writers use the commercial break to structure narrative action. Viewers see the interruption as a time for criticism, speculation, and bathroom visits. At least, viewers used to see it that way. Now there is pause.
5. We call this time shifting. This concept has recently given way to the metaphor of a “stream”; a continuous flow of material. Both scenarios are preconditioned on economic and affective demand.
6. It's helpful to confuse time shifting with stop-time. Conflate the commercial break with Charlie Parker's alto solo, and later, G.C. Coleman's drumming, and later still, the bongos on “Apache.”
7. Kevin Young wrote five lessons of the black radical tradition. More lessons have since revealed themselves to me.
8. My favorite commercial features Michael Jordan explaining that he is successful because he has failed.
9. My favorite commercial features Tyrese singing on a Metro bus.
10. “...And he just kept that beat going. It might be that certain part of the record that everybody waits for—they just let their inner self go and get wild.”
11. Let's describe this process as “production.”

12. Arthur Jafa recently described the camera as a proxy for the white male gaze. He went on to discuss how capturing motion has a symbolic relationship with black history. Fred Moten added that this “fugitive modality” is enacted on screen whenever a black figure is present. Jafa had to figure a way out of this with his cinematography.
13. In “Read me that part a-gain, where I disin-herit everybody” Gordon Hall says, “Politics is something you do with your body.” Before that part, Hall talks about the ways that space can prevent us from “saying or doing particular things, but from even thinking particular thoughts, or feeling particular feelings.”
14. Resist the dominant logics of the cut, the figure, the voiceover, the frame.
15. Radical politics. Black aesthetics.
16. I know the black radical tradition in the religious sense, which is to say, I feel it deeply.
17. Young writes about the truth and the “troof.” He wonders if the dialectic between the two ever resolves itself. When I asked him about that part in the book, he confirmed that there is no truth. But if there was it would be the lie we call the vernacular.
18. I’ve got the feeling. Don’t fight the feeling. Feel the feeling. You’ve got to feel the feeling. Feel the feeling now. Got to feel the feeling. Just feel it.

Reprinted from: *Artists’ Film Biennial: In The (Commercial) Break* selected by artist Martine Syms, ICA London, May 2016

BIOGRAPHIES

Martine Syms (b. 1988) is an artist based in Los Angeles. Her artwork has been exhibited and screened extensively, including recent presentations at *Made in LA* at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, and *Manifesta 11* in Zurich, Switzerland, Karma International, Bridget Donahue Gallery, the New Museum, Kunsthalle Bern, The Studio Museum in Harlem, Index Stockholm, MOCA Los Angeles and MCA Chicago. She’s lectured at Yale University, SXSW, California Institute of the Arts, University of Chicago, Johns Hopkins University, and MoMA PS1, among other venues. Upcoming exhibitions include MoMA, New York, and Raven Row, London.

Kevin Jerome Everson (b.1965) was born and raised in Mansfield, Ohio. He has an MFA from Ohio University and a BFA from the University of Akron. He is Professor of Art at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville. Everson was awarded the 2012 Alpert Award for Film/Video; his films has been the subject of mid-career retrospectives at the Viennale (2014); Visions du Reel, Nyon, Switzerland (2012), The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2011), and Centre Pompidou, Paris, in 2009. His work has been featured at the 2008 and 2012 Whitney Biennials and the 2013 Sharjah Biennial. Everson’s paintings, sculptures, photographs, and films—including eight features (*Spicebush*, 2005; *Cinnamon*, 2006; *The Golden Age of Fish*, 2008; *Erie*, 2010; *Quality Control*, 2011; *The Island of St. Matthews*, 2013; *Park Lanes*, 2015; *8903 Empire*, 2016) and over 125 short form works—have been exhibited internationally at film festivals, cinemas, galleries, museums, and public and private art institutions.

Sondra Perry was born in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, in 1986. She currently has a solo exhibition at The Kitchen, New York. In 2015, the artist’s work appeared in the fourth iteration of the Greater New York exhibition at MoMA/PS1. Other exhibitions include *Disguise: Masks and Global African Art*, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, 2015; *A Curious Blindness*, Miriam & Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery, New York (2015); *Of Present Bodies*, Arlington Arts Center, Arlington, VA (2014); and *Young, Gifted, & Black: Transforming Visual Media*, The Camera Club of New York (2012). Perry performed *Sondra Perry & Associate Make Pancakes* and *Shame the Devil* at the Artist’s Institute, New York, in 2015.

Rami George is an interdisciplinary artist currently based in Chicago. Completing their BFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2012, they have exhibited and screened internationally. They continue to be influenced and motivated by political struggles and missing narratives.

Marco Kane Braunschweiler (b. 1985) is a Swiss-American artist and publisher based in Los Angeles. From 2007–2011 he was the director of Golden Age, an artist-book store and project space in Chicago. He has presented programs at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, the Art Institute of Chicago, and White Flag Projects, St. Louis. He has exhibited at the Swiss Institute, New York; 356 Mission, Los Angeles; Human Resources, Los Angeles; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; and The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, among others.

Irena Haiduk's multifaceted works reach beyond their anchors in Balkan history to mingle with other corrosive forces and slice away at the well-fed bodies of power. She has exhibited at the Institute for Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; Museum of Arts and Design, New York; Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts at the University of Chicago; AKUD, Berlin; the 4th Athens Biennale; 14th Istanbul Biennial; and the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago. A monograph of Haiduk's written works and scores, *Spells*, has been published by Sternberg Press in 2015. A book on *Seductive Exacting Realism* is forthcoming by the Renaissance Society and Sternberg Press.

Nicole Miller was born in 1982 in Tucson, Arizona, moving to Los Angeles in 2001 to attend Calarts, and then continuing with a graduate degree from USC Roski School of the Arts. Nicole has had solo exhibitions at Ballroom Marfa, Centre D'art Contemporain, Geneva, The Highline, New York, and Kunst Werke in Berlin. She has also shown at LAXART in Los Angeles and has been featured in major museum exhibitions such as The Hammer Museum's *Made in LA, Fore* at The Studio Museum in Harlem, the *Dallas Biennale* at The Dallas Contemporary, and the recent reopening exhibition of SFMoMA. Nicole has also been named a 2016 fellow at the American Academy in Rome. Her work is included in many museum collections including those of LACMA, The Hammer Museum, and SFMoMA.

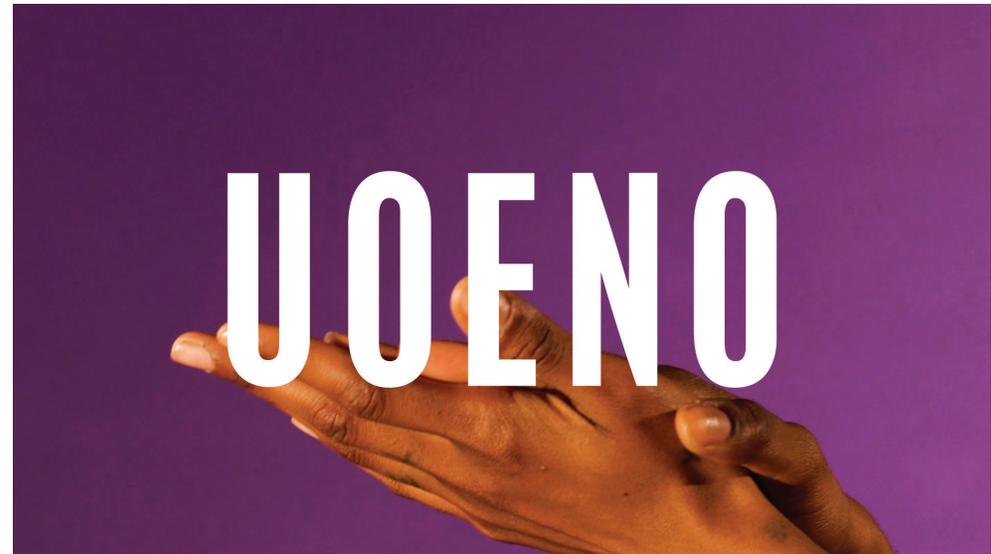
Hannah Black is an artist and writer. Her work is assembled from pop music and autobiographical fragments and draws on feminist, communist, and black radical thought, and has recently been shown at 155 Freeman/Triple Canopy, New York, MoMAW, Warsaw, and Sala Luis Miro Quesada Garland, Lima, among other places. She was a studio participant on the Whitney ISP 2013-14 and graduated from the MFA in Art Writing at Goldsmiths in 2013. She is an editor at New York-based magazine *The New Inquiry* and currently lives in Berlin.

Asha Schechter was born in Portland, OR, in 1978. He works with photography, video, and sculpture. He has a BFA from CCA and an MFA from UCLA. Solo exhibitions include *The Bucket* at metro pcs in Los Angeles, *Mockup* at Artium in Vitoria-Gasteiz, and *Bloopers II* at The Finley, Los Angeles. Group exhibitions include Gavin Brown, Laurel Gitlen, and the Moscow Museum of Modern Art. Other activities include running The Vanity, a gallery in a closet inside of 356 Mission, as well as the DVD distribution company A2Z video.

Theodore Darst is an artist based in New York City. Recent solo and two-person shows include *Ground & Pound* at East Hampton Shed, New York, *Yes* at MicroscopeGallery, Brooklyn, *UNPAINTED* in Munich, and *Paris London Hong Kong* in Chicago. His work has been featured in group shows and screenings at The Whitney Museum, New York, The Institute of Contemporary Art, London, and The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. In 2016 he received his MFA from the Milton Avery School Graduate School of the Arts at Bard College.

Ximena Cuevas (b. 1963, Mexico City) is obsessed with the micro movements of daily life, with the border between truth and fiction, with the “impossibility” of reality. Her work relentlessly seeks out the layers of lies covering the everyday representations of reality and systematically explores the fictions of national identity and gender. It redefines the meaning of documentary. Her videos have been shown in festivals such as the New York Film Festival, Sundance, Berlin, and Montreal, and she was the featured artist at *Video Viewpoints* in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. She has been an invited speaker at numerous events, including those sponsored by the Pacific Film Archive in San Francisco, the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego, the Guggenheim in New York, and most recently at the Guggenheim in Bilbao. Among the many grants she has received are those from the FONCA (Mexican National Endowment for Culture and the Arts), the Eastman Kodak Worldwide Independent Filmmaker Production Grant, and Rockefeller, MacArthur, and Lamplada grants. She toured *Dormimundo*, a documentary about the discomfort of being, as the guest artist of the Central New York Programmers Group fall tour of 2000.

Kerry Tribe is a Los Angeles-based artist working in film, video, and installation. While primarily shown in the art world, Tribe describes her work as “documentary adjacent,” and her research-intensive projects of the last 15 years have explored topics ranging from butterfly wings to space travel, always circling fundamental questions of consciousness, perception, and the inner workings of the mind. Her installations exploit the full potential of the cinematic encounter, often employing multiple projections, custom apparatuses, and timed loops, opening up new ways of thinking about film’s complex relationship to the world it describes.



STAFF

Geoff Abbas / Director for Stage Technologies
Eric Ameres / Senior Research Engineer
Argeo Ascani / Curator, Music
Eileen Baumgartner / Graphic Designer
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Peter Bellamy / Senior Systems Administrator
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Kim Strosahl / Production Coordinator
Jeffrey Svatek / Audio Engineer
Dan Swalec / Master Electrician
Todd Vos / Lead Audio Engineer
Michael Wells / Production Technician